

# **Nashville District**

## **Human Resources Newsletter**

### **“News You Can Use”**

**Issue 15-11-04**  
**15 November 2004**

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep Nashville District employees informed about personnel issues, concerns, and topics. You are encouraged to review the information and disseminate to your organization. If there are particular areas of interest that you would like to see addressed in future issues, an article of general interest, or general comments, please contact John Restey at 615-736-5538 or [John.G.Restey@lrn02.usace.army.mil](mailto:John.G.Restey@lrn02.usace.army.mil).

## **Coming Events:**

**15 October –31 December 2004---Thrift Saving Plan (TSP) Open Season**

**8 November – 13 December 2004----FEHB (Federal Employees Health Benefits) Open Season**

**8 November-13 December 2004—Flexible Spending Account for Federal Employees (FSAFEDS) Open Season**

## **General News:**

### **Department of Defense Medal for the Distinguished Civilian Service Awards Ceremony**

DA is pleased to congratulate Charles E. Smith and Michael A. Parker on their selection as recipients of the Department of Defense (DoD) Distinguished Civilian Service Award. The Secretary of Defense will honor six DoD award recipients at a ceremony on Friday, November 19, 2004, in the Pentagon Auditorium, Room BH650. The ceremony is open to all personnel and a reception will follow immediately after the ceremony outside the Pentagon Auditorium. DA is proud to recognize the extraordinary accomplishments of this special group of individuals.

<b>DoD Award Recipients</b>	<b>Nominating Organization</b>
Dr. Margaret E. Myers	DoD Networks and Integration
Mr. Frank J. Anderson	DoD Acquisition, Technology and Logistics

Mr. Andrew R. Hoehn	OSD Policy
Ms. Evelyn R. Klemstine	DoD Inspector General
Mr. Charles M. Smith	HQDA, AMC
Mr. Michael A. Parker	HQDA, AMC

## **National Security Personnel System (NSPS) Update**

The Overarching Integrated Product Team (OIPT) continues to consider remaining NSPS design options. Design options in the areas of compensation, performance management, employee appeals, staffing, and labor relations are being considered. Mr. Reginald Brown, the ASA(M&RA), represents Army on the OIPT. Enabling regulations are being drafted and are projected for publication in the Federal Register in late December or early January. There will be a 30-day comment period once published.

A decision on nominees for participation in the initial deployment of NSPS, Spiral One, is pending. Spiral One (i.e., pilot) implementation is projected for July 2005.

Another series of NSPS Town Hall meetings is being planned around the time of the publication of the enabling regulations in the Federal Register.

For the latest information on NSPS developments, visit the Office of the Secretary of Defense NSPS web site at <http://www.cpbs.osd.mil/nsps/> and [here on the Civilian Personnel On Line NSPS web site](#) for Army-specific guidance.

## **Health and Benefits:**

### **IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE INSURANCE SERVICES GROUP: NOVEMBER 15, 2004**

We learned, with the start of Open Season, the Plan Comparison Tool on the FEHB website had incomplete data and we began making corrections right away. The tool was corrected and updated beginning Wednesday, November 10th, however, a few more corrections are needed and we anticipate a fully complete Tool by the end of the day. We will continue to update the FEHB website with the latest information as warranted. Employees are encouraged to check back before making final decisions.

### **Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Option B Premium Increase**

The new FEGLI premiums become effective January 1, 2005. Premiums will be applied on pay period beginning January 9, 2005. These are the only FEGLI premiums that are changing at this time. New premiums are shown below:

<b>Age Band</b>	<b>Bi Weekly Per \$1000 of coverage</b>	<b>Monthly Per \$1000 of coverage</b>
65-69	\$0.72	\$1.560

70-74	\$1.20	\$2.600
75-79	\$1.80	\$3.900
80 and over	\$2.40	\$5.200

## **TSP "Catch-Up" Contributions**

### **Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) "Catch-Up" Contributions Update.**

TSP catch-up contributions are additional tax-deferred contributions available to TSP participants age 50 or older who are already contributing either the maximum TSP contribution amount allowed or a dollar amount to any qualified plan which will result in reaching the IRS elective deferral limit by the end of the year. In order to qualify, employees must be in a pay status, and must not be in the 6-month non-contribution period after receiving a financial hardship in-service withdrawal. The annual elective deferral limit for regular TSP contributions is \$12,000 for 2003. Catch-up contributions are limited to \$2,000 for 2003.

Beginning August 24, 2003, eligible Department of the Army civilian employees may make TSP catch-up contribution elections electronically via the Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS) web application at <https://www.abc.army.mil> or the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) automated telephone system at 1-877-276-9287 (see the [ABC-C Telephone Menu](#) on the ABC-C web site for OCONUS phone numbers). Hard copy enrollment forms will not be accepted. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), the DoD payroll system, will not begin to process catch-up contribution deductions until the pay period beginning September 7, 2003.

Publicity from the Thrift Investment Board (TIB) and several non-official publications have indicated elections to contribute could be submitted as early as July 2003 with August effective dates. However, for all Federal agencies, implementation of this program is dependent upon adaptation of personnel and payroll systems to allow for deduction of catch-up contributions. The automated enrollment systems EBIS and IVRS could not be turned on to accept these elections until the data could flow to the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) and on to the DFAS systems.

The Army Benefits Center - Civilian (ABC-C) web site at <https://www.abc.army.mil> provides a "Hot" item with links to Q&A's and detailed information about TSP catch-up contributions.

The delay in implementing the program does not affect the maximum contribution amount of \$2,000 for 2003. Eligible employees considering participation in this new benefit are encouraged to start thinking about the amount to have each pay date if they intend to contribute the maximum \$2,000 in 2003. An example of how to arrive at that amount, as well as other useful information, can be found under "TSP Catch-Up Contributions" at <https://www.abc.army.mil>.

ABC-C Counselors are available at 1-877-276-9287 to answer questions regarding TSP catch-up contributions.

## FEHB Plan Comparison

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is offering a great tool for researching the 2005 health plans and comparing benefits of up to four plans at a glance. This comparison plan search can be found at the website: [www.opm.gov/insure/05/spmt/plansearch.aspx](http://www.opm.gov/insure/05/spmt/plansearch.aspx). With the costs increases and benefits changes, this tool can aid you in narrowing down to the plan that would best fit the needs of you and your family. Many plans offer additional coverage outside of the government plan for dental and vision expenses. Please see the individual brochures on line to get additional information.

**Food for Thought:** *"Life is not what happens to you, but how you react to it...for what caused you to react will surely pass, but how you continue to react can only be passed by you."*